Ambassador Cathy Russell on #Africa4Her

Cathy Russell serves as the U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues. Previously she served at the White House, coordinating the development of the Obama Administration's strategy to prevent and respond to gender-based violence globally. Join Ambassador Russell (@AmbCathyRussell) for a Twitter #YALICHAT on Wednesday, March 2nd at 13:30 UTC. Additional details below.

U.S. Ambassador Cathy Russell Amb. Russell in a meeting with Wanjira Mathai, the Director, Partnerships for Women's Entrepreneurship in Renewables (wPOWER) at the 2015 Global Entrepreneurship Summit in Kenya. (State Department Photo)

The United States invests in women and girls for many of the reasons we invest in young African leaders: it's the right thing to do, and it's the smart thing to do.

When policies and programs consider women and girls, they're more successful. They promote stronger democracies and more durable peace agreements. They increase food security and make for healthier families. They improve public service delivery. And they lead to fewer conflicts and more rapidly growing economies.

As the U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues, it's my job to work with my colleagues across the U.S. government and with leaders around the world to advance the status of women and girls. As President Obama said in his trip to Kenya and Ethiopia last summer, countries won't get ahead unless they include and empower women and girls.

That's why every day I talk with government officials, world leaders, and women and girls about how we can work together to help women and girls achieve their full potential.

In that past year alone, we've made some exciting progress to advance the status of women and girls. Here are just three of the main areas where we're focused on making a difference.

Education

Last March, the President and First Lady announced Let Girls Learn, a U.S. government initiative that addresses a range of challenges that prevent adolescent girls from attending and completing school.

As part of Let Girls Learn, the United States supported a <u>Women in Science (WiSci) camp</u> in Rwanda last summer. For three weeks, 120 girls from nine countries learned valuable skills in science, technology, engineering, art and design, and mathematics (STEAM).

Health and safety

Education is one way to help empower women and girls. But it takes a complete approach to get the job done—one that considers issues like health and safety, in addition to education. That's why the United States is also working with Tanzania and Malawi to support women and girls from several angles.

In addition to focusing on education, our efforts will also tackle gender-based violence and health challenges like HIV/AIDS. Malawi and Tanzania are <u>DREAMS</u> (Determined, Resilient, Empowered, AIDS-free, Mentored, and Safe) countries, which means they are part of a partnership between the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and the Nike Foundation to tackle HIV/AIDS.

Entrepreneurship

Financial independence can make an incredible difference for women and their communities. Women are more likely to invest their earnings back into their family, paying for things like their kids' education and immunizations. And when they own their own business, women are more likely to hire other women, so empowering women entrepreneurs has a multiplier effect within communities.

That's why we're focused on empowering women entrepreneurs. Over the past year, the United States has opened physical centers that offer resources to women entrepreneurs in Zambia and Kenya. And just last week I joined Kiva to launch the <u>Women's Entrepreneurship Fund</u>, which will expand access to finance for women entrepreneurs in 84 countries.

The fact is that it will take all of us - men and women, boys and girls - to achieve the progress we need to help women and girls achieve their full potential. But if every one of us takes action, we can make real and lasting progress for gender equality.

You can help make this possible. Take the #Africa4Her pledge and tell us how you will invest in women and girls. Show us how you will raise, educate, protect, support, mentor, and elevate the many women and girls of courage in your life.

Join the YALICHAT on Wednesday, March 2 at:

12:30-13:30 Cape Verde Time (CVT)

13:30-14:30 UTC/GMT

14:30-15:30 West Africa Time (WAT)

15:30-16:30 Central Africa (CAT) and South Africa Standard Time (SAST)

18:30-19:30 Eastern Africa Time (EAT)

19:30-20:30 Seychelles and Mauritius (SCT/MUT)

La campagne d'une fonctionnaire pour se mettre au service du public

Avoir envie d'améliorer la vie des gens autour de soi est une chose. Mais passer à l'action en est une autre. « Depuis mon enfance, j'ai été encouragée à contribuer au bien-être des autres et j'étais vraiment attirée par la fonction publique », explique Allison Silberberg, ancienne maire adjointe, aujourd'hui maire élue d'Alexandria, une ville de 150 000 habitants séparée de Washington par le fleuve Potomac.

Allison Silberberg travaille au service de la collectivité et dans la fonction publique depuis plus de 25 ans. Elle a notamment passé huit ans à la Commission des opportunités économiques de sa ville.

Les membres du réseau YALI qui ont suivi le cours Renforcer les services du secteur public l'auront reconnue. Dans ce cours YALI en ligne, elle explique comment devenir un fonctionnaire efficace et pourquoi il est important d'établir des normes déontologiques. Des principes qu'elle a eu elle-même l'occasion de mettre en pratique ces douze derniers mois, aussi bien pendant sa campagne qu'après son élection. "Elle a entamé son mandat de maire le 1er janvier 2016."

Lors des primaires, pendant lesquelles les électeurs choisissent le candidat qui va porter les couleurs de leur parti à l'élection générale, Allison Silberberg a battu deux adversaires, dont le maire sortant, élu à quatre reprises. Une victoire avec une marge de 300 voix. Puis en novembre, elle a remporté 63 % des voix du scrutin à la mairie.

« C'était une campagne à l'ancienne, où les gens se sont mobilisés spontanément », se félicite-t-elle. Une campagne menée exclusivement par des bénévoles, ce dont Allison Silberberg est particulièrement fière. « On est allés sur les marchés d'agriculteurs locaux. J'ai participé à autant d'évènements que j'ai pu. Les gens m'accueillaient chez eux, c'était formidable. » Presque tous les soirs pendant la campagne, Allison Silberberg a pris part à des évènements organisés pour rencontrer le public. Il n'y avait pas forcément beaucoup de monde à chaque fois mais pour la maire élue, ce face-à-face avec les électeurs a fait son effet. « Ça a l'air de rien de discuter comme ça avec 10 personnes ou moins, dit-elle. Mais tous ces gens vont ensuite en parler à d'autres. Ils posent des questions, et il n'y a rien qui me sépare d'eux. Je n'ai aucune idée de ce qu'ils vont me demander. C'était très improvisé et sincère. »

Parmi les dossiers qui semblent avoir retenu l'attention des électeurs : la proposition d'Allison Silberberg d'empêcher les élus de voter sur des projets immobiliers quand ils ont reçu des fonds de la part des promoteurs. La première mesure qu'elle prendra une fois en poste à la mairie sera d'établir une commission d'éthique chargée d'éclairer le conseil municipal sur de tels conflits d'intérêts, a-t-elle promis.

Lorsqu'elle avait 7 ans, se souvient Allison Silberberg, sa mère lui avait demandé ce qu'elle voulait faire plus tard. « J'étais assise avec mon goûter à la table de la cuisine après l'école, en compagnie de mon chien. Et j'ai répondu "Je crois que si une personne a besoin de lunettes parce qu'elle ne voit pas bien le tableau à l'école ou d'un manteau parce qu'elle a froid, ce serait vraiment super de pouvoir l'aider". »

Pendant ses études universitaires, Allison Silberberg a été stagiaire auprès du sénateur du

Massachusetts Ted Kennedy. « Il m'inspirait beaucoup. Chaque jour, en arrivant dans son bureau, on sentait qu'on était là pour remplir une grande mission. Et je me disais : "Je veux avoir ce sentiment d'être investie d'une mission toute ma vie". »

#YALICHAT: Community Organizing and #YALIGoesGreen

#YALICHAT on community organizing



Last week, in a <u>three-day Facebook #YALICHAT</u>, community organizers from the YALI Network in Nigeria, Mali the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Zimbabwe fielded questions on how to mobilize and motivate your audience by holding a #YALIGoesGreen event on climate change.

A common theme of the chat was the need to raise awareness about the need for adaptation and mitigation in the face of climate change.

Jean-Vincent Merry Gankpa asked for an effective argument that would motivate people in his community to address climate change. Alf Sidibe, one of the community organizers from Mali, responded: "What i did in my Community was to take practical examples from yesterday and today. I gathered people from my community — mainly community leaders — and talked to them about what they see now compared to what they saw yesterday. It helped you to [see] clearly how the environment is being affected by our daily actions. When I did that people easily understood the causes and the actions to be taken to protect the environment."

Albert Chijindu Obi Berto asked about the best way to disseminate information to people in inaccessible rural areas. "Rural dwellers usually respect their local administration institutions headed by a Chief, so engaging Chiefs to disseminate information will be key," said organizer Obrien Makore. "In many rural areas in Africa, there are village health workers who engage with local people frequently, as do agricultural extension officers. If your audience has access to mobile networks, sending bulk SMSs can be very useful."

Makore responded to another question about rural Lesotho, suggesting focusing on those things the audience can help to change, such as deforestation, veld fires and burning fossil fuels. "You can start your initiative to educate rural folks using their vernacular language starting at ward using local administration institutions like the chiefs."

Of course, what most of these climate-minded Network members wanted were suggestions on launching their own #YALIGoesGreen event. "Identify the main policymakers who will be most influential to the population," advised Kakel Mbumb. "It is most likely the traditional leaders with whom you can partner in order to spread the message to the community." Chima Michael Oleru reminded members to focus on the "specific needs of your immediate community and start from

there. This way you can empower others in joining and supporting your cause."

Here are the six steps offered in the chat for getting your #YALIGoesGreen event underway:

- 1. Find a small aspect of climate change that affects your community the most: Trash and recycling? Drought and farming? Awareness of climate change?
- 2. Research solutions related to that issue including information from the YALI Network and members facing similar issues.
- 3. Find an audience in your community that is interested in solving this issue. University students? Farmers? Spreading awareness through local radio? Local journalists? Talking to secondary school classes?
- 4. Convene those community members to discuss the problem and solutions you can take action on. Find an event facilitation guide to help you with events on yali.state.gov/climate. Picking up trash? Starting a radio show? Holding community info sessions?
- 5. Continue to work with these interested community members and turn your conversations into actions.
- 6. Then share the results and ideas with the YALI Network to earn a Green Champion certificate and help other YALI Network members with their own community challenges.

The Promise of Wind Power

Join #YALIGoesGreen this month. Learn how to get involved at <u>yali.state.gov/climate</u>

Solar, biofuels and hydropower are among the energy sources the United States has been developing aggressively since President Obama began the transition to a <u>clean energy economy</u> with his <u>Climate Action Plan</u>.

Wind, an energy technology with a long history, is another green power source with great potential. A new report from the U.S. Energy Department analyzes how the nation might increase its use of wind power.

Many African nations are also investing in wind power, which can, as the U.S. report says, "address key societal challenges such as climate change, air quality and public health, and water scarcity."

The Lake Turkana Wind Power Project in the north-east of Kenya aims to produce 20 percent of the country's electricity generating capacity when it comes online in 2016.

Ayitepa Wind Farm the east coast of Ghana and is also slated to come online in 2016 and promises to generate 10 percent of the country's generating capacity.

Issued in May, the almost-300-page report says the United States has tripled its use of wind power since 2008. Wind supplies 4.5 percent of the nation's electricity today, and the nation could set a

realistic plan to meet 10 percent of the electricity demand in 2020, 20 percent in 2030, and 35 percent in 2050.

If the nation does reach that 2050 target, the report calculates considerable benefits:

- The nation's total electric bill would be 3 percent lower.
- Greenhouse gas emissions would drop by 14 percent.
- Using less fossil fuel would reduce pollutants such as sulfur dioxides, nitrogen oxides and particulate matter.
- Pollution-related deaths would be reduced by almost 22,000 between 2013 and 2050.
- The use of water would go down 23 percent as the nation became less dependent on fossil-fuel power plants, which use water as a cooling agent.

Beyond these calculable benefits, Wind Vision predicts adoption of more wind power also would put downward price pressure on fossil fuels in energy markets, saving consumers \$280 billion.

So if wind will give electricity for less money with less pollution, maybe wind power should be in your future too.

#YALIVotes: "Give Young People the Feeling They're Cared About"

(Kendra Helmer/USAID)



Ako Essan Emile has seen what happens when elections go bad. He was attending a university in Côte d'Ivoire's city of Abidjan when violence broke out in the wake of the disputed 2010 election.

In the years since then, he's thought a lot about what it takes to bring free and fair elections to his country. "Much has to be done to build trust between young people and politicians," Ako said. "YALI Network members in Côte d'Ivoire have started creating a platform for young people to interact with political leaders."

He contrasted his experience as a Mandela Washington Fellow with his experience with politicians at home. "We came to the United States in August and we had the opportunity to talk to President Obama. We'd never had this opportunity in our country."

Ako sees open communication between candidates and the people they hope to represent as an important basis for better elections and better leadership. "Most leaders don't consider young people when making their strategies. They just use young people as bait to attract other young people."

Ako is the managing director of Radio Arc-en-ciel, a community-based station in the urban area of

Abobo. In the months leading up to the October election, Radio Arc-en-ciel hosted roundtable discussions to give a voice to one of the country's largest (1.5 million) and least-represented communities and also to inform Abobo's residents.

"One of the key issues is lack of education about the electoral process," Ako said. "No accurate information is given, and if a politician comes into a community he will talk to the population according to his point of view, but not in a balanced way. People can be misled and it can cause conflict."

Ako Essan Emile (right) in the Radio Arc-en-ciel studio in September 2015. (Kendra Helmer/USAID)

In addition to the roundtable radio shows, Radio Arc-en-ciel hosted events that balanced live music with information. "We invited experts to come in and explain the electoral code to the population. If they know the electoral code, they will be able to monitor whether the election is going the right way or the wrong way. If someone doesn't have accurate information they can feel that fraud is going on, and then one rumor will come out and spark into violence and escalate into bloodshed."

With elections upcoming in Burkina Faso, Benin, Niger and Uganda, Ako pointed to things that worked well in Côte d'Ivoire in keeping the elections nonviolent and fair. "During our election, young people were on the ground as observers and were reporting live. Some other civil society organizations copied this example, so there were many young people spread around Côte d'Ivoire reporting, which helped to deter any kind of fraud."

Ako sees responsibility on both sides for improving elections. Leaders must listen to the voters. "Young people should draft their own manifestos (or platforms), give them to the politicians and say, "These are our priorities."

And voters have to be responsible in how they use their vote. "Sometimes the population is much more passionate about politics than the issues that relate to them directly. In many capital cities, there's no access to water and electricity, and the roads are in bad condition. Mobilize to address these specific issues. I think more and more we need to select our leaders based on their manifestos and what they put forward, instead of voting for them because they come from our region or because they are the uncle of my brother or something like that."

#YALIGoesGreen: What Action Will You Take?

There are many ways you can participate in #YALIGoesGreen:

- Take our new course, *Understanding Climate Change*, and earn your YALI Network Certificate.
- Raise awareness of climate change and its effects by teaching *Understanding Climate Change* in your community.

Like #YALILearns, #YALIGoesGreen is a Network-wide initiative to promote collaboration among YALI Network members. More tips on how to facilitate a #YALIGoesGreen or #YALILearns event can be found on yali.state.gov/learns.

Let's take action and help spread the word today!

Hosting a #YALIGoesGreen event

Want some ideas on how to facilitate and engage and audience during your #YALIGoesGreen event? Download this event facilitation guide (PDF) with a complete lesson plan!

Please remember that all #YALILearns and #YALIGoesGreen events are organized on the basis of educating your community with shared YALI Network resources. You should never charge a fee for a YALI Network event, and remind others if you see this occurring.

Promoting a #YALIGoesGreen event

Promote #YALIGoesGreen	with	these	graphics
Facebook Banner:			

×

Profile photo:



Sharable graphics:



×

More on Climate Change

- Online learning spurs offline climate action
- It Started with a Challenge: One Month, 1,000 Trees
- Lifestyles of the Famous and Green
- #YALILearns: Air Conditioning, Aerosols and Agriculture
- YALI Network 2015: What a Year It's Been!
- #YALICHAT: Community Organizing and #YALIGoesGreen
- A Young African Leader's Perspective on COP 21
- What Climate Change Means for African Women

#YALIGoesGreen Tweets

ENGAGE WITH US:

Follow @YALINetwork

How Taxes Are Spent: 'Every Citizen Has the Right to Know'

Udamen Ilevbaoje at budgIT. Photo **x** courtesy Udamen Ilevbaoje. **x**

People with little knowledge of financial management can get lost when they try to understand their government's budget, says Nigerian YALI Network member Udamen Ilevbaoje.

That is why in 2011 Ilevbaoje joined <u>BudgIT</u> as a volunteer. BudgIT is a nongovernmental group in Lagos dedicated to improving transparency and accountability in government. It focuses on presenting government budget data to the public in easy-to-understand tweets, infographics and interactive applications. It has since expanded from Nigeria into Liberia and Sierra Leone.

"We believe that in a democracy, every citizen has the right to know how his/her taxes are expended in the delivery of public infrastructure and services," BudgIT states on its website.

"Equality and open access to governance is entrenched in democracy and its institutions," says Ilevbaoje, now BudgIT's project officer. "Our work is to make this information available and get citizens in organized form to demand delivery of public services."

Ilevbaoje says that Nigeria presents its national budget to citizens in overall numbers but not in details such as how much funding is available for neighborhood projects like rehabilitating a school, repairing potholes in roads or purchasing buses to get people with disabilities to a rehabilitation center.

BudgIT's <u>Tracka</u> service allows citizens to research and track budgets and public works projects. They can also give feedback to the government and to their communities. With existing social media tools, the platform brings together people with common interests to share documents, videos, photos and comments. It uses live online meetings on Facebook to discuss topics like how funds are being used in Ebola relief.

Clients learn about financial management and open dates at BudgIT offices.

Photo courtesy Udamen Ilevbaoje.

Its <u>Fitila</u> service uses graphics to highlight illicit financial flows in and out of a country. That can help save national budget losses from tax evasion and corruption.

Having won several prestigious international awards, BudgIT recently partnered with the Kaduna state government to help it develop open data and become more transparent.

"I use civic advocacy to drive improved service delivery," Ilevbaoje says.

"Service to the community is critical to a functional society. ... I believe I can do this for a better society.

"I am inspired by the work of my lead partner, Oluseun Onigbinde, who took it upon himself to lead the advocacy to ensure that the schools are built. His personal example of accepting responsibility teaches me a lesson of taking the lead to solve problems at all times."

Nigeria's election: What went right?

A woman from the Hausa tribe, with a 💌

red mark on her thumbnail indicating she has already validated her voting card, waits at a polling station located in Daura, Nigeria. (© AP Images)

Nigerians earlier this year elected new legislative leaders and President Muhammadu Buhari, who defeated incumbent Goodluck Jonathan by 2.5 million votes.

The results were remarkable for reasons that transcend the individual candidates' careers. It was the first peaceful transition of power to an opposition party in Nigeria's democratic history. U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry called it a "decisive moment for democracy."

Other African nations with upcoming elections — such as Côte d'Ivoire, Mali and Guinea — are studying what went right in Nigeria in hopes of replicating the process. Here's what they are finding:

Emboldened youth

Kingsley Bangwell, who runs a group called <u>Youngstars</u>, credits a rise in youth activism in the years just prior to the election for creating a more engaged electorate. Students protested corruption in Nigeria's oil industry in 2012 and the Boko Haram insurgency in 2014. Young people, said Bangwell, grew confident in their ability to "organize around an issue and get the government to listen."

Youth "drove the campaign of President Buhari," according to Samson Itodo, founder of Youth Initiative for Advocacy Growth and Advancement. Notably, Buhari was not the youngest candidate — he was almost the oldest. But young voters supported Buhari because they wanted to see "what someone who has … the political will to fight corruption can do to improve livelihoods," Itodo said.

Social media

Between 2011 and 2015, voters took to social media in droves. Before the March election, Nigerian rappers Banky and M.I participated in Twitter chats to raise voter awareness, and both sides used social media to reach young people.

<u>Enough</u> is <u>Enough</u>, a coalition promoting good governance, hosted a concert to which attendees gained admittance by showing their voter cards. The coalition promoted the show on social media with ads encouraging voter registration. "People can be apathetic," said Yemi Adamolekun, director of Enough is Enough, "so the idea was to use music and comedy to get them to participate."

Youngstars built a media campaign called "Vote Not Fight," which reached 62 million people with its message of nonviolence. The speaker of the house and the chairman of the national election commission joined thousands of others in signing on as "peace ambassadors" at the Vote Not Fight website, and the artist 2Face contributed a "Vote Not Fight" video.

Credible oversight

A woman registers to vote in Lagos, ▼ Nigeria. (© AP Images)

Attahiru Jega, chairman of Nigeria's Independent National Electoral Commission at the time of the recent election, had overseen the 2011 general election, and that election had been called "significantly more transparent and credible" than the three preceding ones by a global monitoring group.

Jega gained trust in 2011 by compiling an entirely new voter registry. He required voters to be accredited at the polls prior to voting. This year, Jega's commission introduced permanent voter cards with biometric information embedded in them. Polling stations had readers to verify voters' identities.

While a six-week postponement of the election in February raised concerns about corruption, Jega reassured voters. A popular #iStandwithJega Twitter hashtag trumpeted his credibility. In the end, Jega enjoyed trust from both the ruling and the opposition parties ... and a lot went right.

Applying to be a Mandela Washington Fellow: Answers from the Experts

Britta Bjornlund and Todd Haskell from the U.S. Department of State answered hundreds of questions about the 2016 Mandela Washington Fellowship during a recent #YALCHAT. We have selected some of the most popular questions from YALI Network members to highlight below.

Q: How does the Fellowship help me for my future career?

If you are selected, the Mandela Washington Fellowship will provide you with the opportunity to develop your skills at a U.S. college or university with support for professional development after you return home. We encourage you to link the academic sessions, leadership sessions, site visits, and networking opportunities of the Fellowship to your future career goals.

Q: What does the selection process look like?

A: The Mandela Washington Fellowship selection process is a merit-based open competition. After the application deadline, all eligible applications will be reviewed by a selection panel. Following this review, chosen semifinalists will be interviewed by the U.S. embassies or consulates in their home countries. If advanced to the semi-finalist round, applicants must provide a copy of their international passport (if available) or other government-issued photo identification at the time of the interview. Finalists and alternates will be notified by their U.S. embassy or consulate of their selection.

Q: What does the application mean when it says "must be proficient in English?" What is the yardstick to measure

that?

A: Can you speak, read, and write fluently in English? This is an intensive program conducted in English so all Fellows will need strong English language skills to make the most of the Institute and Summit. Semi-finalists will be interviewed in English at the U.S. embassy or consulate.

Q: Is it important to have a recommendation letter?

A: The Fellowship is looking for the next generation of leaders in Africa. It is up to each candidate to decide what documents best reflect your background, interests, capabilities and potential.

Q: I do not have a passport yet. Am I eligible to apply?

A: Yes! If you are selected, you will need to acquire a passport.

Q: Is the YALI program also helping Young African Leaders to be involved in the implementation of democracy in Africa (in countries where democracy is not fully applied)? If yes, what are the different tools given to them (to the Young African Leaders) to be fully involved in the implementation of democracy in Africa?

A: One of President Obama's top priorities in Africa is to strengthen democratic institutions. Progress in democratic governance will most certainly lead to gains in virtually every other sector. The Mandela Washington Fellowship provides young leaders the opportunity to learn leadership skills that Fellows can take back to their countries and put into action. We encourage returning Fellows to tailor the many opportunities for mentoring, professional development, and community service to support their particular goals, whether that is in public management, civic leadership, or business and entrepreneurship. To learn more about what each of these three tracks entail, please visit https://youngafricanleaders.state.gov/category/washington-fellowship/.

Q: I would like to know how the YALI Regional Centers and the Mandela Washington Fellowship are connected, are those who attended YALI regional eligible to apply to the Mandela Fellowship?

A: The YALI Regional Leadership Centers and the Mandela Washington Fellowship are two key components of President Obama's Young African Leadership Initiative. You can read more about the initiative at youngafricanleaders.state.gov. Those who have attended a program at a YALI Regional Leadership Center, or who are applying to one, are still eligible to apply for the Mandela Washington Fellowship.

Q: I would like to ask whether Mandela Washington Fellowship follows the people that do the training after they have gone back home? What is the result of the training after long period of time this training had been taking place in America? Why isn't this program in another language to

benefit everyone if it is important for a leadership democratically?

A: When Fellows return to their home countries, they bring back new skills and new enthusiasm, and can take advantage of professional development opportunities, including professional practicum experiences in companies and organizations in Africa, mentoring relationships, resources to speak at conferences, regional networking conferences, and entrepreneurship grants. The Fellowship hopes to inspire a multiplier effect — that returning Fellows share with their friends, family and colleagues what they saw, learned, and perhaps taught others in the U.S. so that this experience grows. We understand that there are a range of languages across Africa, but because the institutes are being held in the United States at American colleges and universities with American professors and U.S. leaders, the course work will all be in English. We hope that some of you who might be less skilled in English will be able to participate in future years.

Q: There's a question on my application that asks if I have been to the U.S. before. If you haven't been, does that harm your chances of being selected?

A: Not having visited the United States does NOT harm your chances of being selected. There is no requirement to have traveled to the United States in the past.

Q: Hi, I am a citizen of Sudan currently living as temporary resident in Kenya. Am I eligible to apply for the Mandela Washington Fellowship?

A: Yes. Applicants must be currently residing in a country in Sub-Saharan Africa AND be a citizen of a country in Sub-Saharan Africa (it can be a different country) to be eligible. Applicants must be a citizen of one of the following countries: Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cabo Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Republic of the Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Applicants must also currently reside in one of the above countries. If you are a citizen of one of the above countries but residing in a country not listed above, you are not eligible.

Q: Do the YALI Network online courses determine your eligibility for selection?

A: No, you do not need to have completed online courses to be eligible for the Fellowship, and members of the YALI Network do not have increased chances of being selected.

Q: How many Fellows will be selected from each country?

A: The Mandela Washington Fellowship does not use country quotas to make Fellow selections. The process takes a variety of factors into account to inform the final selection. The Fellowship anticipates including Fellows from each country in Sub-Saharan Africa in 2016, as it did in 2014 and

2015. The final selection for 2016 will incorporate diversity in all senses of the word. Opportunities are open to people regardless of their race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, geographic location, socio-economic status, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity. The Fellowship is committed to fairness, equity, and inclusion. Final numbers from any given country will also take into account the country's population, the number of applications received, and other contributing factors.

Make sure you also check out the following links that also provide useful information about the application process:

2016 Application Instructions (PDF)
2016 Application FAQ
Tips from a MWF
Common Questions

Applying for the Mandela Washington Fellowship: The importance of being a leader

Lee Mark du Preez

(Courtesy photo)

When South African Lee Mark du Preez first heard of the Mandela Washington Fellowship, he knew it was an opportunity for him to take the work he'd been doing in his community to the next level. Since his school years he'd been on the board of the Children's Home in his town of Pietermaritzburg, which helps orphaned, abandoned and abused children. He had also worked as an entrepreneur and consultant on South Africa's black economic empowerment initiative.

But when he applied for the fellowship in 2013, he was not among those invited to come to Washington. The next year du Preez applied a second time, and this time the outcome was very different as he was selected to be a 2015 Mandela Washington Fellow.

What changed between his first application and the second, and why did he become a better candidate the second time he applied?

He remained on the board of the Children's Home but doubled his efforts to get involved, giving more of his time and taking on more responsibilities. In addition, he became an advisory board member at the University of KwaZulu-Natal for Enactus, a global student organization that uses the power of entrepreneurship to create positive social change. Enactus teams from 1,600 universities in 36 countries compete for the best plan with the greatest impact. His chapter, du Preez said with no small amount of pride, has "won the championship in South Africa five times. We've never not made

the semifinals."

He was also asked by the leader of his local chamber of business to create a youth leadership and business development program. "I became more involved in programs that run on a larger scale," he said, which he believes helped his application to stand out in a way it hadn't before.

"Absolutely keep trying," he said, when asked what he would advise applicants for the MWF who have applied and not been selected. "They must keep trying like I did. But they should also continue to develop and raise their profiles, so that by the time they do try again, they can be so good that it's almost impossible for them to be ignored."